CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS OF THE NATIVES OF BUKA

By GORDON THOMAS

131 BUKA is a small island, thirty miles long and ten miles wide, lying north of Bougainville and is the most northerly isle of the Solomons, though politically it is included in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

773 According to Buka legend the island was created when a god
823 and goddess arrived from out of the south (Bougainville) and, travelling in a *mon* (canoe) to the northward, the island of Buka arose in the wake of the *mon*. At various intervals the god threw away the husks of betel-nut which he was chewing and these, in turn, became the small islands off the west coast of Buka. While the god steered the coast line was straight; later when the goddess piloted the craft the course was crooked and hence the large harbour at the north-west end of the island. Upbraiding the goddess, the god resumed the steering and eventually arrived back at the starting point, leaving behind a straight coast line.

●196 The word in the Buka language to designate a white man is *tolala* and had its origin when the first sailing ship was sighted by a Buka man standing on the beach. The huge spread of canvas appearing on the horizon seemed to the astonished native nothing more than an island approaching. Excitedly he called out: "*A tol alana mayen!* (An island is coming here!)" When it was found that white men were aboard they received the name formed by the first part of the native's cry.

881 Like most tribes of Melanesia their initiation ceremonies for youths to enter manhood are of paramount importance, and are still maintained with great secrecy, though missionary and government influence has done much to eliminate many of the more savage rites. Weeks before the ceremony the great spirit, Ndook, can be [776] heard calling in the bush, warning the community of its advent so as to prepare pigs for his feasting. The women—particularly the